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NEWS AND NOTES

AN OPEN LETTER

To all "Journal" readers, and especially to all organizations of English teachers affiliated with the National Council:

The former Committee on English Composition Teaching—a committee representing both the National Council and the Modern Language Association of America and consisting of six members, F. G. Hubbard of Wisconsin, J. M. Thomas of Minnesota, A. B. Noble of Iowa, H. G. Paul of Illinois, V. C. Coulter of Missouri, and E. M. Hopkins of Kansas—has now been made a Council Committee on English Teaching in Elementary Schools, and has been enlarged by the addition of the following new members: O. B. Sperlin, Tacoma High School, Tacoma, Wash.; E. L. Miller, Central High School, Detroit, Mich.; F. S. Camp, William St. School, Stamford, Conn.; Lucy B. Moody, Allegheny High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Adelaide S. Baylor, Department of Public Instruction, Indianapolis, Ind. Even yet the committee is hardly large enough for the work ahead, and it is proposed to increase it still further by naming additional representatives from the field to be studied. Commissioner P. P. Claxton has given this committee official recognition by naming its chairman a special collaborator of the United States Bureau of Education—an appointment which means that the Bureau will give the committee all possible assistance, and will publish the results of its work.

The committee's new task involves grave difficulty because of the complexity and the size of the field to be covered. In this instance it seems useless to send questions broadcast to individual teachers; and if satisfactory data could be gathered in that way, the tabulation of them by the committee might be impossible within any reasonable time. It is proposed instead to carry on the work by localities, asking an individual or a committee in each to gather and summarize the data for that place and to report the results to a committee of the nearest general teachers' organization, and asking this more general committee to summarize and report to the central committee—in all cases the data to accompany the report.

This plan, of course, imposes no little responsibility and labor upon each of the co-operating committees; but the ultimate results aimed

at are of such importance and advantage to all teaching and teachers that it is hoped to find a sufficient number of co-workers willing to assume a temporary inconvenience that future burdens may be lighter for themselves and their fellows.

To obtain these co-workers this letter is published, with the following requests:

1. That the president of every teachers' organization willing to assist will designate an existing committee, or appoint a special one, to co-operate in its territory with the central committee; and that he will report the names of this committee to the central chairman at once.

2. That this co-operating committee will by whatever means possible—correspondence or conference or at teachers' meetings—have appointed within its territory as many elementary-school subcommittees as may be practicable or convenient, each representing a single locality, including cities of the first, second, and third classes, and, if convenient, rural schools, each class separately listed; and will report these committees to the central chairman as soon as they are named. Each committee should have a chairman of special experience and judgment in elementary-school matters, willing to help in a good cause.

After this initial step, instructions as to further procedure will be given in personal letters to chairmen and through the *Journal*, and questions will be answered in the same way. The questionnaires to be used are now ready for printing, but may be further revised after the first copies are sent out.

The central chairman has a plan for making each elementary-school subcommittee the beginning or nucleus of a permanent organization of elementary teachers and other English teachers—a city or county organization—in places in which no such organizations now exist, and of affiliating these with larger organizations and through these with the National Council; a plan which is now being tried out in his own state. Details will be given on request.

A number of teachers' organizations, elementary and general, have already offered their services to the central committee in advance of this published request. These offers are greatly appreciated, and many more are hoped for: the success of the proposed work is largely conditioned upon receiving a sufficient number of them.

For the Committee,

EDWIN M. HOPKINS, *Chairman*

LAWRENCE, KAN.
September 15, 1913

ORIENTAL PLAYS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

A program of oriental plays presented at the University of Washington at Seattle on Tuesday, May 6, 1913, appeared so interesting to the editor that he made inquiry concerning the club which produced them. Professor Garrett's letter in reply appears below. The plays were: *Life Is a Dream*, from the Japanese, *Sakoontala*, from the Hindu, *The Sorrows of Han*, from the Chinese, and *The Pot Mender*, also from the Chinese. The cast of each play was made up of students not taking part in the other plays, and before each play Dr. H. H. Gowen gave a short explanatory talk on the significance of the work.

DEAR MR. HOSIC:

In reply to your note, let me say that the English Club of the University of Washington has been organized for two years. The purpose in organizing was to have a club where students and instructors interested in English studies might meet in an informal way. The club meetings have not been too frequent, for the University of Washington is rather club-ridden. Year before last the club gave an Old English Christmas festival, and on St. George's Day it gave several small pageants—this in addition, of course, to the regular club programs. Last year we had a Christmas festival with carols, boar's head, games, and stories, and in the spring we gave the oriental plays, the program of which I sent you. Next year the president plans to do one or two heavy pieces of dramatic work and to devote the regular club meetings largely to producing original work, i.e., essays, stories, poems, dramatical pieces, and songs, in other words, to make it a sort of clearing-house for literary ability, of which the University possesses a good deal. We have several other projects in mind which promise well, but we must try them out before telling of them.

Yours truly,

ROBERT MAX GARRETT

A BRANCH OF THE COUNCIL IN MARYLAND

On Thursday, June 26, 1913, during the annual meeting of the Maryland State Teachers' Association, held at St. John's College, Annapolis, Md., a state branch of the National Council was organized, to be known as the Maryland Council of Teachers of English. Membership is open to all teachers of the state. The annual meeting of the council will be held at the same time and place as that of the state association. The work of the council will be directed by an executive committee, consisting of the officers and three additional members, appointed by the president. Of this executive committee, three at

least, must be supervisors or teachers engaged in secondary education, and three in elementary education. It will be the aim of this council to work for the more effective teaching of English throughout the state.

The following officers for 1913-14 were elected:

President—Willis H. Wilcox, State Normal School, Baltimore, Md.

Vice-President—Arthur F. Smith, Lonaconing High School.

Secretary—Andrew H. Krug, Baltimore City College.

Treasurer—Louise W. Linthicum, Annapolis High School.

ANDREW H. KRUG, *Secretary*

ASSOCIATION OF HIGH-SCHOOL TEACHERS OF ENGLISH OF NEW YORK CITY

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON TEACHERS' INTERESTS.

The Committee on Teachers' Interests has inquired into the amount of work exacted of teachers of English and compared results with those obtained by the committee of 1905. In addition to this, it has made an attempt to ascertain whether the difficulties under which teachers of English do their work are, or are not, becoming greater.

The material for this report was obtained from the blanks sent out during the spring term of 1912 to all high-school teachers of English and mathematics in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Over 750 teachers replied. Full reports were received with the exception of one school in New York City and part of the schools in Philadelphia.

The daily press echoes constant criticism of the English of our high-school graduates. Complaint is made that their spelling is poor, their powers of expression feeble, and that those who enter engineering are unable to make intelligent written reports of technical work. Furthermore, our younger generation in New York is notorious for its misuse of the English language.

We frankly admit that we are not doing all that society may, with reason, expect. One reason for our failure, stated in the report of the Committee on Teachers' Interests in 1908, is as follows: "The proportion of pupils of American antecedents is steadily decreasing. In many classes in our schools it is as low as 25 or 30 per cent. Many of our pupils of foreign parentage speak, or hear spoken at home, only a foreign language. Others hear the English language so ill spoken that the effects are worse than those of the foreign language." This proportion of foreign-born pupils is increasing. Another difficulty arises from wholesale admissions into high schools. The discussions concerning retarda-

tion of pupils have stimulated principals of elementary schools to unload many ill-prepared pupils upon high schools in order to graduate 90 per cent of eighth-grade pupils.

Our critics demand better results in the first two years of the course. The function of the high school has changed. It is no longer the privilege of the exceptionally gifted, but the opportunity of all children during the early years of adolescence. This change in purpose reflects a change in society. The great mass of elementary-school graduates find that the business world does not welcome them and that the doors to the skilled handicrafts and trades are shut. Apprentices in trades must be older than our elementary-school graduates. At the meeting of the High-School Teachers' Association, November 17, 1912, Superintendent Stevens mentioned that the New York Central Road accepts no apprentices under eighteen. The boy of fourteen and sixteen or seventeen years, the awkward and aimless age, should remain in school and get something. He must not be crowded out into the messenger-boy job.

In addition to the growing demands of the public and to the character of the pupils, prevailing conditions in high schools have made the task of the English teacher more complex. The modern city high school has become a center of social endeavor. The burden of this enlarged scope falls most heavily upon the teacher of English. School papers, school annuals, debating clubs, dramatic societies, short-story clubs, and the new cult of vocational guidance fill our free periods, occupy our afternoons, and encroach upon our evenings.

Again, the *organization* of our schools is almost daily becoming more complex. Frequent tabulations of reports, multiplication of records, the making of special programs, and duties of supervision have, in one school, made frequent the remark that, when there is any time left, the teacher instructs the pupils.

The following part of this report is a comparison of data obtained by a committee of this association in 1905 and that obtained during the spring term of 1912. The average conditions for each English teacher in both groups, that is, of 1905 and of 1912, is as follows:

No. of classes to a teacher in 1905.....	5:4	In 1912.....	6
No. of additional assignments in 1905.....	3:7	In 1912.....	4
No. of periods of teaching in 1905.....	21	In 1912.....	21
No. of pupils to a teacher in 1905.....	145	In 1912.....	181

It seemed to the committee *in 1905* that, in view of the necessity of the English teachers giving some time to the composition work of every student in order to secure adequate results, the number of pupils is a

better basis for determining the amount of work to be done by the teacher of English than is the number of hours of teaching. The committee in 1905 recommended, therefore, that no teacher be required to teach more than 125 pupils in one term. In the Spring Term of 1912, the teachers of English averaged 181 pupils—45 per cent more than your former committee recommended, and 38 per cent more than the teachers in 1905 actually instructed. And this increase in number of pupils has been put into effect in the face of growing public discontent with the results obtained in English under the more favorable conditions prevailing at the time of the former report.

The report of 1905 also contains a comparison of the conditions of English teaching with the conditions of teaching other subjects. The *purpose* of it was to ascertain whether a disproportionately heavy burden was placed upon the English teacher. Reports from ten schools in 1905 are as follows:

Average Conditions for a Teacher of English in 1905		Average Conditions for a Teacher of Other Subjects	
5:5	No. of classes	5:2	
3:5	No. of additional assignments	3:8	
21:8	No. of periods of teaching	21:3	
149	No. of pupils to a teacher	119	

In 1912 data were collected with the view of ascertaining whether the work of the teacher of English is still disproportionate with that of the teachers of other subjects. English and one other subject were chosen for investigation because the committee hesitated to send questionnaires to teachers already overburdened with requests for information from many courts of inquiry. The subject of mathematics was selected because it seemed to be the only academic subject that both approximated in its number of hours the number of hours of English teaching and was also required throughout the entire course.

In 1912, reports from all schools are as follows:

Average Conditions for a Teacher of English		Average Conditions for a Teacher of Mathematics	
6	No. of classes	5	
4	No. of additional assignments	4	
21	No. of periods of teaching	23	
181	No. of pupils to a teacher	172	

The third part of this report gives a comparison of the work of teachers in English in New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago. The committee wished to ascertain to what extent, if any, the work of the teachers of English in New York City was more burdensome than that of teachers in other cities of approximately the same size.

Average Number of Classes			
In Chicago.....	5	In New York.....	6
In Boston.....	5		
In Philadelphia.....	6		
Average Number of Additional Assignments			
In Chicago.....	6	In New York.....	4
In Boston.....	9		
In Philadelphia.....	3		
Average Number of Teaching Periods			
In Chicago.....	20	In New York.....	21
In Boston.....	19		
In Philadelphia.....	22		
Average Number of Pupils			
In Chicago.....	158	In New York.....	181
In Boston.....	156		
In Philadelphia.....	185		

The teacher of English in New York City, then, instructs fewer pupils than the teacher in Philadelphia, 14 per cent more pupils than the teacher in Chicago, and 15 per cent more than the teacher in Boston.

In the report in 1908 the committee recommended that the number of periods per week devoted to English be increased to four throughout the entire course. Such a plan would enable the teacher to do his work more efficiently because the number of pupils in a given term would be reduced. It accords with the report of the Committee on the Articulation of High Schools and Colleges of the National Education Association; namely, that fewer subjects be studied at a time and each subject be studied more intensively. Future revision of the course of study will probably be in this direction.

In view of public criticism, the continued proportionate increase of our foreign population, the dissatisfaction of supervisors and of teachers themselves with results, this committee recommends: that the number of pupils to a teacher of English be limited to 125; that English be required for four periods a week through the high-school course; and that, in making additional assignments in the daily program, account be taken of any special work a teacher of English, or of any other subject, is required to do or voluntarily assumes.

Committee	{	ERNEST S. QUIMBY, <i>Chairman</i>
		JOHN H. MENEELY
		CHARLOTTE G. CHASE
		ALINE C. STRATFORD
		ALICE C. WHITE